



Proposed Consolidation of Rosario Castellanos Elementary School and Lazaro
Cardenas Elementary School

January 9th, 2018

Rosario Castellanos Elementary School,
2524 S Central Park Ave

6:00-8:00 pm

CPS Staff in Attendance

Julissa Cruz, Sonya Castro, Cristina Carreto, Alex Cortez, Jaime Navarro, Minerva Garcia Sanchez, Adam Jentleson

CPS Presentation

Ms. Cristina Carreto, Family and Community Engagement Manager, welcomed the audience and proceeded to give a brief overview of the presentation structure: introduction, key dates and logistics, presentation of the school actions, and time for public comments. She then handed the mic over to Ms. Minerva Garcia Sanchez, who would be giving the full presentation.

Ms. Sanchez began by greeting the audience and noted that representatives from ODLSS, OLCE, and Talent departments would be present after the meeting to answer any questions regarding the transition. She indicated that the meeting would last two hours with time at the end for public comment. She then mentioned that both a notetaker and stenographer were present to record the meeting and that public comments would be presented to the Board of Education for consideration. Each speaker would have two minutes to speak and/or ask questions. She then reminded the audience of three important dates: two community meetings on January 9th and January 16th, followed by a meeting in the CPS Board of Education Chambers on January 25th. Following the Board meeting a formal vote on the proposal would occur at the February Board meeting or a later date. Ms. Sanchez concluded the introduction by notifying the audience that those who do not speak can email comments to transitions@cps.edu.

Ms. Sanchez then proceeded to supply in-depth detail regarding the proposal. Cardenas and Castellanos will be consolidating into one school operating across three buildings. The current Cardenas facilities at 2345 S Millard and 2406 S Central Park would serve grades K-3, while the current Castellanos facility at 2524 S Central Park would serve grades 4-8. She then mentioned that there would be no impact to any current Castellanos staff members and that academic planning teams would be employed to help

ease the transition of students. She then briefly described the history of the push to consolidate and enumerated key facts and figures about both schools.

Ms. Carreto stated that the meeting was now open to public comment and urged participants to sign in to speak. When the speaker's number is called, they should approach the mic and will have two minutes to speak.

Public Comments

Ms. Mora: Parent. For the last 12 years, I've been a parent of students at both schools, and I support this proposal. The school is losing students based on confusion of a lack of a full grade continuum (separated by K-3 and 4-8).

Rocio Rivera: I've been a member of the Castellanos LSC, President of the No Children Left Behind chapter, and member of the Bilingual Advisory Council. My daughter and stepchild went to both schools. I'm proud of the principal and educators who've helped my girls move forward. I'm 100% behind this proposal.

Renanda Mora: Parent of three children, two went to each school. I support the proposal. Castellanos is a good school, and I'm very happy to have the opportunity to have a principal who is supportive. The possibility of the Castellanos' name being taken away is why I have mixed feelings.

Rocio Garciaz: Member of Enlace.org. I heard many comments about the school and environment, and I support this proposal 100%. What concerns me is that the positions won't be affected for the 2018-19 school year as highlighted in the presentation, and that councilman and case managers won't be affected. My worry is beyond that--schools should have a certain level of staffing and budget. I worry that the consolidation is happening too fast since other consolidations across the District have taken months or years. I would like it to be a longer process where there are more people present.

Alex Gonzalez: Teacher at Telpochcalli school. I grew up and live in Little Village, am Vice President of area chapter of the CTU. Question: What will happen to the LSC at Castellanos? The annex at Central Park--what will happen to this building? Will Cardenas continue using it? Is there something in writing that guarantees no loss of jobs? What will happen to the services at Castellanos if approved?

(Unidentified Speaker): Mother of second grader, in support of consolidation. The proposal is a good idea and a great opportunity so that kids don't struggle from going from one school to another. Cardenas is a better school. The proposal will help out a lot.

Cindy Calderon: Teacher at Castellanos for 17 years. I support the proposal. The school moved from probation to a Level 1+ school thanks to the Principal. He is a great leader who will support all teachers to be the best possible. I'm happy to work together with the Cardenas teachers.

Maria Guadalupe: President of the LSC at Castellanos. I support the proposal, it will benefit students from Cardenas. Welcome to the new teachers.

(Unidentified Speaker): I do not live in community but am a member of CTU. I'm interested in what families have to say. I want to mention certain things. I've been working for CPS for 30 years. In that time, the resources for schools have lowered. My concern is whether or not the community will be able to demand more resources. I imagine there's a secretary at each school...when something happens to a child, there should be someone to talk to. We live in a violent city and so we need social workers, counselors, PE/music teachers, all resources that should continue to be supported. I'm worried these supports will not be in place next year. These services should be guaranteed.

Gabriella Briceno: Parent of three kids at each school. I'm very happy to be here to support the Principal and teachers who are taking care of our kids. I'm in favor of the proposal because the Principal at Cardenas is able to help at both schools. Let's support him and the proposal. I have three kids, all have attended both schools. I think the proposal is good. If we have the same teachers and if the Principal can work with both sets of teachers, then let's support. We need to have same funding and come together as a community to make sure the school goes up a level.

Letizia Comacho: Resident and parent. I have lived in the area for 20+ years, my kids went to both schools, and have teachers that push the kids to continue studying. I have long been a proponent of the consolidation. Now that we have an opportunity, I was first to support the proposal. I had to take a child out of the school temporarily, but very happy to be back at Castellanos.

Consuela Oseguera: Parent of two students at Castellanos. I'm very happy to be here, my kids' education is very important to me. I'm apprehensive about sending my kids to Cardenas because I do not know the reputation. I've talked to teachers and principals, and thought it important that teachers wanted to support the kids. It's very important to support our Principal. I'm in agreement because I want our kids to move on in terms of their education. I support the proposal.

(Unidentified Speaker): Member of the LSC. There have been several questions on how fast the proposal was. There was due process at both schools, we reached an agreement, put everything on the table, voted, and then talked to CPS. For some it was very fast. The first thing we need to do is unite both schools. We want the best for students at both schools. We want to make it clear that the process was fast, and that changes could be shocking, but in this life, all of us undergo changes, evolutions, so this will make it easier on our kids.

Ms. Carreto: This is another reminder to sign up to comment, or email to transitions@cps.edu. We must stay here until 8pm so if anyone has comments, feel free to sign up to speak. We are not here to answer questions, but if you want to keep commenting, that's fine.

Dr. Feiwell: Principal at Cardenas. I've worked in the community for several years--as the Principal at Cardenas for twelve years and Principal at Castellanos for one year. I fully support this consolidation for a couple of reasons. We have a saying: students first, adults second. When you have two separate schools, K-3 and 4-8, there's a huge disconnect in their education. Our goal (mine, the teachers, the ESP's, etc.) is that our students be successful in whatever they're going to do. This proposal guarantees a strong curriculum from K to 8th and we'll be sure that students have support the entire time here. There are lots of questions regarding the proposal, and it's my job as Principal to guarantee these supports. We've had \$500K in budget cuts over the last year but NO changes in positions. We will continue to make sure all supports are here. We have awesome teachers and staff at both schools, and together with both staffs the children will succeed, be even better. We are going to get a Level 1+ rating at Castellanos. It will be an incredible journey when we bring the two staffs together. Lastly, I'm not going anywhere, my contract was renewed for four years. It's a commitment for me because I believe in the kids. There are many changes ahead, including the re-branding as one school across three buildings.

(Unidentified Speaker): I'm not really well informed about what could happen in the future, and not sure if the budget will be the same or will increase or decrease. The way I see it the proposal shouldn't affect the budget. I am in support as long as it's for the good of the students, but I want to make sure budgets are not affected.

(Unidentified Speaker): Parent. Two minutes is not enough to express all that you think. Someone was saying that the kids will be scared to come to a new school. Do we want it to change? Yes, I'm in complete agreement. This process to consolidate isn't really that fast as some have mentioned. We've been talking about it for years. Many parents don't come to the community meetings and so aren't well informed. I'm very happy about this proposal, it represents progress. Remember, it's not just a job for a single person--this is

a team effort. Children, teachers, and parents can't leave the Principal alone to make all changes. We as parents must be conscious and engaged if we want the school to be better.

Consuela Oseguera (2nd comment): I'm a Parent. We all want to talk and some of the people aren't here, but what's important is that you who are here. Dr. Feiwell loves his job, which is why he's here. We're all interested in the education of our kids, that's why we're here. I want to recognize a teacher in the audience for making the decision to stay at the school.

Alex Gonzalez: Speaking as a resident of the area, if the proposal is approved, please remember that the previous parents have fought to change the name to Castellanos--a woman and author--someone the girls can look up to. If approved, please remember the name Castellanos is an important reminder of influential women in our society.

Brianna Alvarez: I'm a 7th grader at Castellanos. The situation is a little weird for me, hard to process, but I feel like if you get used to it, it will be OK. I'm looking forward to the plans Dr. Feiwell has for the school. I feel like as a 7th grader, I was looking forward to graduating from Castellanos, so it's a little weird to graduate from Cardenas. For high school, they'll ask which elementary school did I graduate from--do I say Cardenas or Castellanos? I feel this proposal will really improve the school. I'm fully on board, it's just hard to process. Same thing, same rules, everything applies the same as at Cardenas. I'm looking forward to the schools consolidating.

Denise Benbrook: Teacher at Cardenas. I've been teaching at Cardenas for 18 years, love the neighborhood, and am proud to be an adopted member into Little Village. We've heard a lot from parents, but only one teacher, so I thought I should speak. I support the consolidation, and have so much respect and faith in Dr. Feiwell. Any time I've talked to him he always puts students before adults. For a long time at Cardenas, I never knew what happened to the students when they leave after 3rd grade. There's not a good bridge between the two schools. For me, it's not about a name changes, but knowing that someone is in charge that cares about the school as much as the teachers do. I'm very happy and confident the kids will have an amazing education the whole way through.

Karen Rubio: I'm an alumni from Castellanos and Cardenas and am excited about this change. I am currently in college but have four younger siblings that attend one of the two schools, and I always felt the transition to Castellanos was more or less the same welcoming environment. I also believe that Dr. Feiwell is a great principal and will be able to take on the challenge of overseeing both schools.